

TODAY'S family

May 2026 Cuyahoga

10
birthday
ideas kids
will love!

Adventure Zone

Family fun at an
affordable price

NEW FEATURE! Parent Win/Parent Fail

Readers share real-life
parenting stories

No screens, no weekends

A look at family life in 1776

The many shapes of motherhood

What the animal world can teach
us about care and connection

PLUS

Humor
Book Club
Fun Events
Living Well





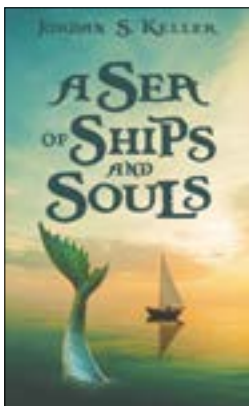
A Visit with the Birds: A Hands-On Nature Book

By Sarah Levine

Join a curious child on a walk through the park, where readers are invited to listen for bird songs, spot colorful feathers, count birds, and even pretend to fly. With engaging and hands-on

prompts woven into the story, this book transforms a simple outing into an unforgettable learning adventure.

Featuring stunning cut-paper collage artwork and a warm, inclusive story, *A Visit with the Birds* encourages young readers to slow down, observe nature, and connect with the nature around them, no matter where they are. Along the way, children will learn about common birds—like pigeons, robins, chickadees, and blue jays—while building early science and observation skills. Grades K–3.

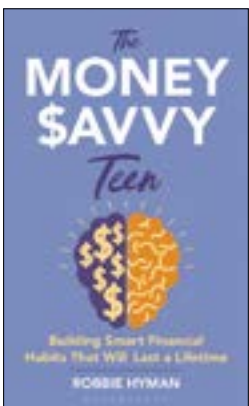


A Sea of Ships and Souls

By Jordan S. Keller

As the son of two washers, Jace Kit has only dreamed of adventure—until a fabled Sea Sprite washes ashore and turns his world upside down. The Sea Sprite needs a hero to save the Ocean Queen from a ruthless pirate terrorizing the Remos Ocean. With a legendary trinket and handmade boat to his name, Jace is her only hope—even though he knows the trinket is fake. With Jace's skilled sailing and the Sea Sprite's magic, the pair enters a competition to win a ship capable of catching the pirate. The only thing

darker than the depths are the Sea Sprite's secrets, and Jace realizes too late his adventure might cost a price too high to pay.



The Money Savvy Teen: Building Smart Financial Habits That Will Last a Lifetime

By Robbie Hyman

An invaluable guide introducing young adults to essential money-related concepts and skills.

The average US household carries more than \$7,000 in credit card debt. Americans pay \$35 billion a year in fees for mishandling checks and debit cards. Too many have failed to learn even basic money management.

In *The Money Savvy Teen*, Robbie Hyman looks to change that. Using an accessible approach, Hyman details how to develop a healthy relationship with money, the mechanics of money, and navigating the social side of money—an important yet often overlooked aspect of financial success. Filled with stories and humor, this book features simple, easy-to-remember lessons, from how to resist advertisers' psychological tricks, to understanding the fees of using another bank's ATM, to developing a standard phrase that can help anyone out of a tense moment when a friend asks to borrow money.

Armed with these simple lessons, money savvy teens will have the tools and confidence to build smart, responsible financial habits that will last a lifetime.

**See page 19 for two more books
perfect for Mother's Day!**

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GYMNASTICS

for kids & adults!

Now in our 23rd year of helping gymnasts to reach their goals!

Spring Session 2

April 27 – May 23 (4 weeks)

Drop-in Classes (April 27–May 23, 2026)

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Classes are available on Mon, Wed, & Sat.

The cost for drop-in classes is:

45 min or 1 hr = \$25 & 1 hr 15 min = \$30.

Register with a friend and we will be sure they are in the same group!

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June 8 – Aug 14, 2026

9:15 a.m. – 3 p.m.



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- Gymnastic camp at Jump Start is a great way to explore and experience gymnastics for the first time, learn new skills, or build a solid competitive base for the next season.
- Our philosophy at JSG is that gymnastics is for everyone, an excellent basis for physical fitness, and benefits coordination for every sport and children's health.

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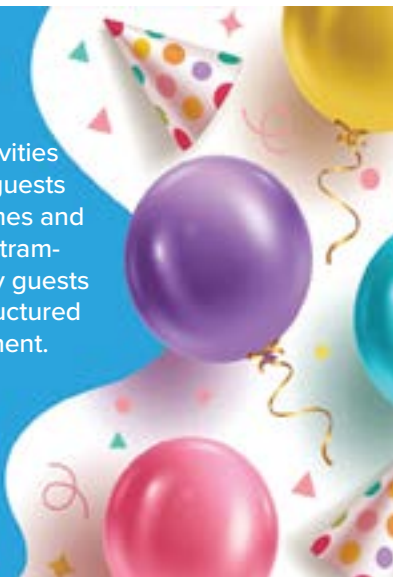
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Do you know someone who deserves the SPOTLIGHT?

We're always looking to share inspiring, heartwarming stories — whether it's a young entrepreneur chasing a dream, a child who's overcome challenges, a teacher making a lasting impact, or someone quietly spreading kindness in their community.

If you know someone whose story would inspire or uplift Today's Family readers, send us an email and tell us about them! Please include a few details about who they are and what makes their story special. If your idea is a good fit, one of our writers will reach out to learn more and craft an article.

As a thank you for helping us find great stories, we'll send you four tickets to Atlas Cinemas plus \$20 in concession vouchers!

Please note: if more than one person suggests the same idea, the tickets will go to whoever sent it in first.)

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"My son attended two summer camps and each week he was thrilled to go! He wished they were longer. We look forward to next year!" - Jen

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Mom Life The Funny Side



What three words solve Dad's every problem? Ask your mother.

Good moms let you lick the beaters after making brownies, great moms turn them off first.

Motherhood is like a fairy tale—but in reverse. You start in a beautiful gown and end up in stained clothes cleaning up after little people.

A mom says to her friend, "My teenagers have taught me something even David Attenborough couldn't." "What's that?" "Why some animals eat their young."

Who's a mom's favorite child? The one who sleeps.

What's the worst part of dinnertime? Realizing you're the one who has to cook it.

Science teacher: "When is the boiling point reached?" Student: "When a mom has to ask more than five times."

What's the hardest part of a child's birthday? On the anniversary of your hardest day... they get the party.

Why do moms hide in the bathroom? Because sometimes it's the only room with a lock.

Mom's recipe for iced coffee: 1. Have kids. 2. Make coffee. 3. Forget you made coffee. 4. Drink it cold.

How do you know something is officially lost? When Mom can't find it.

A boy asks, "Mom, can I have \$20?" She says, "Does it look like I'm made of money?" He replies, "Isn't that what M.O.M. stands for?"

I asked my mom her favorite exercise. She said, "Running out of patience."

Nothing tests a mom's hearing like a child whispering "Mom..." from another room.

A clean house is a sign that...everyone is asleep or not home.

Why is it so hard to find anything? Because Mom isn't looking for it.

Mom logic: "I'm not yelling... I'm just speaking loudly enough for you to hear me."

Behind every great kid is a mom who's pretty sure she's messing it all up.

My kids call it "helicopter parenting," but I prefer to think of it as "surveillance with love."

Your summer family tradition starts at Adventure Zone

Where great views, relaxing spaces, and nonstop fun come together

By Dan Miller, Today's Family Editor

Tucked along the scenic shoreline of Geneva-on-the-Lake, Adventure Zone offers families a place to play, unwind, and make lasting memories—all with a stunning Lake Erie backdrop.

From mini golf and go-karts to a climbing wall and arcade games, Adventure Zone has become a go-to destination for families looking for a fun, affordable outing. But what truly sets it apart is something less tangible: the atmosphere.

"This is a positive family experience," says co-owner Donniella Winchell. "It's an affordable atmosphere where families will feel comfortable and safe."

That sense of comfort is intentional. Whether it's a first visit or a family tradition, guests are welcomed into an environment designed to be easy-going and inclusive—where kids can run, play, and explore while parents relax and enjoy the moment.

Adventure Zone's location plays a big role in its appeal. Situated near the lake, the property offers more than just activities—it delivers a full experience.

"We have a great property with a view of the lake

and we wanted to use it," says Winchell. "The state park's bike path goes along the shoreline and in the evening, you can see a beautiful sunset."

It's not uncommon for families to spend the day enjoying the attractions and then linger a little longer, taking in the view as the sun dips below the horizon. That combination of energy and calm is part of what keeps visitors coming back year after year.

Behind the scenes, Adventure Zone is very much a family operation—something that influences everything from the way the business is run to how guests are treated.

"Our daughter and son-in-law are integrally involved and our grandkids work here during the summer months," says Winchell. "We also hire about 90 seasonal employees each year. This business is owned by a family that cares about families."

That commitment is evident not only in the welcoming atmosphere, but also in the opportunities the business creates for local teens and young adults. For many, a summer job at Adventure Zone is more than just a paycheck—it's a first step into the workforce and a chance to be part of something community-focused.



For families visiting Geneva-on-the-Lake, Adventure Zone offers a refreshing alternative to more crowded or high-pressure attractions. There's no need to rush or plan every minute. Instead, it's a place where families can move at their own pace—whether that means a competitive round of mini golf, a few laps on the go-kart track, or simply enjoying the lake breeze.

In a time when many outings can feel expensive or overwhelming, Adventure Zone keeps things simple: fun activities, a welcoming environment, and a setting that encourages families to slow down and enjoy time together. *Continued on page 6* →



Adventure Zone Family Fun Center

Geneva-on-the-Lake, Ohio

The close-to-home family fun entertainment center.

The perfect place for birthday parties, day camp excursions, company picnics & group outings!

Go online to reserve your date!

- Adventure Golf • Go-Karts • Bumper Boats • Batting Cages
- Rock & Rappelling Walls • Merry Go Round • Adventure Krawl
- Golf Cart Rentals • 100+ Game Arcade • Zip Zone Zip Line
- Snack Bar • Two Escape Rooms • Hammer Slammer

**NEW
for 2026!**

The Lottie Express: A little train for little people.

Bicycle Rentals: Begin Memorial Day Weekend.

The Original Jumping Pillow: A fun experience for all ages.



440-466-3555

www.AdventureZoneFun.com

Adventure Zone from page 5

And sometimes, that's exactly what families need most.

Adventure Zone opens for the 2026 season weekends on Saturday, May 2, 2026 and begins seven days a week Memorial Day weekend. For hours and pricing, visit www.adventurezonefun.com, call (440) 466-3555, or text (216) 469-5903. They are located at 5600 Lake Road E in Geneva-on-the-Lake.



Adventure Zone Attractions

There's something for every age and energy level at Adventure Zone!

- **The Lottie Express** – A little train for little people. NEW!
- **Bicycle rentals** – Beginning Memorial Day Weekend. NEW!
- **The Original Jumping Pillow** – A fun experience for all ages. NEW!
- **Zip Line** – Soar above the park for a quick adrenaline rush.
- **Go-Karts** – Race family and friends around the track.
- **Hammer Slam** – Travel up the 30 foot tower with a great view of the park.
- **Bumper Boats** – Cool off with a splash-filled spin on the water.
- **Adventure Golf** – A classic miniature golf experience for all ages.
- **Climbing & Rappelling Walls** – Challenge yourself and reach new heights.
- **Batting Cages** – Step up and take your best swing.
- **Bungy Tramp** – Bounce, flip, and fly high in the air.
- **Merry-Go-Round** – A timeless favorite for younger visitors.
- **Escape Rooms** – Work together to solve puzzles to beat the clock.
- **Adventure Krawl** – A kid-focused climbing and play structure.
- **Arcade** – A mix of new and classic games for indoor fun.



SMALL MOMENTS, BIG MEMORIES

Celebrate Mother's Day and Father's Day with 50% off admission at Greater Cleveland Aquarium

Add a splash of wonder to mom or dad's weekend! Greater Cleveland Aquarium is celebrating special caregivers with parenting-themed activities, extended hours and 50% off admission for moms, stepmoms, foster moms and grandmas on Mother's Day Weekend (Saturday & Sunday, May 9 & 10, 2026, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.) and dads, stepdads, foster dads and grandpas on Father's Day Weekend (Saturday & Sunday, June 20 & 21, 2026, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.).

"With work, school and schedules, it can be hard to slow down and simply be together," says General Manager Stephanie White. "Sharing moments of curiosity and discovery without distractions creates space for real connection."

Whether it is watching a small Eastern spiny softshell turtle dash over for a treat during a habitat feeding, seeing a giant Pacific octopus shift colors or high-fiving a scuba diver as a 10 foot sandtiger shark glides overhead, the Aquarium offers up-close views and simple, memorable experiences families can enjoy side by side.

White adds that guests are often surprised to learn how different parenting looks in the underwater world. "For many aquatic animals, parenting is front loaded—focused on finding a mate, safeguarding eggs or ensuring survival rather than ongoing care after young hatch," she says. "Cuckoo catfish leave their eggs for other fish to raise unknowingly, poison dart frog parents carefully transport tadpoles to safe pools one by one and weedy seadragon

fathers carry fertilized eggs until they hatch—showing that there's no single 'right' way to be a parent in nature."

Mother's Day and Father's Day Weekend activities are included with general admission (\$0–\$19.95 per person). Visiting moms receive a commemorative button* and 50% off their adult admission (available in person at the ticket counter only) with the purchase of another adult or child ticket on May 9 & 10, while dads are eligible for the same parental discount June 20 & 21.**

Families looking for a gift that lasts longer than a single day can choose a year of undersea adventures with 10% off any level of Aquarium Annual Pass—available May 2–10 with code 26MOM10 or June 13–21 with code DAD26. Annual passholders enjoy unlimited return admission, free parking during visits, exclusive programming, discounted and free events, plus savings in the gift shop and on birthday parties.

Follow @CLEAquarium on YouTube, Facebook and Instagram in the days leading up to Mother's Day and Father's Day for animal parenting facts, trivia giveaways and easy at home card and craft ideas.

* While supplies last.

** Pet parents are not eligible for this particular promotion. Cannot be combined with other offers.

Greater Cleveland Aquarium is located at the Nautica Waterfront District, 2000 Sycamore Street in Cleveland. For more information visit greaterclevelandaquarium.com or call (216) 862-8803.



Fairport Harbor Lakefront Park Beach

Concessions open and paddle rentals available Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day.

Head to the beach this summer!

The park is open 6 am to 11 pm daily year-round.

LAKEMETROPARKS.COM

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TODAY'S FAMILY ADVICE COLUMN

LIVING WELL

with Rebecca Fellenbaum

Parenting, stress, relationships, family life—we all have questions.

Ask yours anonymously or with your name. Selected questions will be featured in an upcoming issue of Today's Family.



Balancing support

Dear Rebecca: My daughter has a new interest, and I want to support her without overdoing it. I'm excited for her, but also worry about pushing too hard or turning it into something stressful. How can I encourage her while keeping it fun?

— Lizzy, Painesville

Dear Lizzy: Awesome awareness, and congratulations on your daughter's new interest. I sense both your excitement and hesitation. You're definitely not alone—this is something so many parents wrestle with.

You say you're worried about "overdoing it" or "turning it into something stressful." That tells me something is coming up for you, and it isn't just about your child's interest.

Where does your worry come from? Is this triggering something that's happened before, either when you were a kid or as a parent?

Often when we feel tension, it's because we're telling ourselves a story. The story is usually based on assumptions or past experiences.

Instead, stick to what's true right now.

Here are the facts you've outlined: Your child is interested in something new. That's it.

When you look at that simple fact, without attaching a story, what you do next becomes much clearer.

That's also where the opportunity for you to do some exploratory work begins. That might look like:

- Noticing your excitement and any emotions that immediately follow it
- Letting your child forge the path of her new interest, even if it's slower or less structured than you think it should be
- Checking in with her, instead of assuming what she needs

And most importantly, noticing when that pressure starts to rise in you.

You don't have to make this into anything bigger than it is.

Sometimes, the most supportive

thing we can do is allow our kids to pursue their interests in their own way.

Trust that your awareness, the very thing you're showing here, is what will guide you. Our kids sure don't come with a manual, and that makes it fun!

Everything's fine... so why do I feel stuck?

Dear Rebecca: Dare I say, life feels pretty stable right now, and my kids are in a good place. I've been thinking about doing something for myself, but I keep putting it off. It feels easier to stay in my routine. How do I take that first step?

— Mary, Highland Hts.

Dear Mary: Great question! This comes up a lot, especially when life finally slows down a bit. I am going to frame this from the perspective that the answers are within you!

When we have an internal conflict, it is hard to know what to do next without first understanding what's going on within ourselves. This exercise will help you weigh the options, and hopefully you'll gain clarity on your next right step.

Let's go through your thought process like a slide show. First, sit in the first scene of life being stable and kids in a good place. How does that feel? You can close your eyes for a moment and internally scan from head to toe to really tap into what comes up for you when you're in this moment.

Then, move to the second scene: thinking about doing something for yourself. Where does that desire come from? What feelings come up that encourage you? What parts of you are putting it off? If you can sit quietly and ask these questions, answers may arise. You can journal these if that's helpful.

For your final scene, I want you to play out two options. First, imagine the slide show where you stay in your routine. How does that feel? What are you doing? What is lacking, or feels good about this scenario? Then,

play out the scene where you do something for yourself. How does that feel? What are you doing? What is scary or great about that scene?

Which final scene feels most aligned? Which one feels open and warm and expansive, and which feels more closed?

In my work, I talk about our next right step lighting on our own unique illuminated path. When you think about doing something for yourself, you don't need to know what that looks like 10 steps from now. You just need to look for the next step to light up. Once you're clear internally which direction you want to go, set your intention there and then pay attention. I am confident your next move will become clear.

Please let me know how it goes!

Rebecca Fellenbaum is a certified life coach, writer, and Cleveland area mom who helps parents enjoy this time in their lives. You can find her at rebeccafellenbaum.com.

Have a question on your mind?

You're not the only one!

Submit your question anonymously (or include your name) and it may be featured in an upcoming issue of Today's Family. Scan the QR code to ask.

DANCE CLASSES FOR ALL AGES

2 years old to pre-professional

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From Thrift to Thrifting

How secondhand finds—and a fresh perspective—can turn the old into something new

I grew up in an era of hand-me-downs and thrift store shopping. Back then, these practices weren't very popular, certainly not flaunted if someone were to compliment an article of clothing or household item. Today, Instagram accounts are full of folks finding fabulous items they've thrifted for themselves, their families, or to resell. The fact that it's gone from an adjective to its own verb—thrifting—says a lot about its popularity.

Today, you'll encounter all ages at thrift stores – older folks trying to stretch a dollar, families looking for inexpensive kids' clothes and toys, and young people treasure-hunting for household goods for new apartments. You may even find people of all ages with smart phones scanning tags to ascertain whether brand-name items, books, or collectibles can be sold online as a side hustle.

In fact, Forbes magazine noted that the secondhand apparel market grew from \$28 billion in 2019 to \$49 billion in 2024. And that growth isn't

only in apparel, but household items as well. Whether we're looking for value, treasures, or just trying to save useful items from a landfill, resale shopping is on the rise.

And as thrift store traffic and pricing increases, people have also begun to embrace another of the unspoken hobbies of my youth and early adult-



hood: dumpster diving. Sometimes, it's easier for people to place unwanted but still usable items at the curb instead of going to the trouble of finding someone who needs it, selling it online, or holding a yard sale. It can be true that one person's trash is another one's treasure.

My first apartment as a single person was filled with items I found at thrift stores, rummage sales, or at the curb on trash day. Since I didn't have



The profits from Goodwill retail stores funds their missions, enabling them to invest in the community through employment training, social services, and family-strengthening services. A great place to do your thrift shopping!

the budget for a particular aesthetic, my search for items was based on what I saw and how I could alter it to serve my needs. The wooden door became a mosaic framed desktop when balanced across a pair of file cabinets. A quirky cane chair from the curb completed the home office set up. A low wooden dresser from a rummage sale, once painted, became a convenient countertop and linen closet in the awkward bathroom of my rental. Over time I added more items, based on the treasures I found and how I could modify them for functionality as my space became homier.

Initially, my husband didn't embrace this way of thinking. If we happened to drive by something with potential just waiting at the curb to be reborn, he would only stop under the cover of darkness, and once the offending items were loaded, he'd drive away like he was leaving a crime scene. But over time, as he watched me refinish and refashion items, he slowly came around. Eventually, he caught the bug himself, when he took over the refinishing of a wooden frame mirror I had unapologetically

pulled from someone's trash. He had it sanded and stained before I could get to it, marveling at how the new-to-us style accented our youngest's bedroom furniture so perfectly.

Recently, he texted me a photo of a wooden desk with curved legs he'd found at the curb. "Who is this?" I joked, "and what have you done with my husband?!" He picked it up because he thought one of the kids could use it as a desk, and had it sanded and refinished in no time flat. And now we're both on the lookout at thrift stores for the perfect chair to match it. Maybe it is true that everything old is new again. That seems true, whether it's in music, fashion, food, or furnishings.

Thinking back on all the things I've seen reborn—even those reclaimed by my family and me, reminds me that our activities are much bigger than just repairing what was old.

It takes fresh eyes—and a little hope—to see how something old can become new again. Sometimes, all it takes is looking around with fresh eyes to find a new perspective—or solve an old problem in a completely different way.

Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine

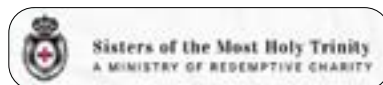


2026 Summer Season

May 3–October 25
We will be serving breakfast in the St. Ann Dining Room every Sunday after 9:30 a.m. outdoor Mass.

May 3

Fr. James Roach will conduct the 4 p.m. services with rosary and benediction. Fr. Roach will bless commemorative holy pictures and pins free to all. Be there for the service.



Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine

Owned and operated by the Sisters of the Most Holy Trinity

21281 Chardon Road, Euclid

www.srstrinity.com

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A Century of Faith

Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine celebrates 100 years

For 100 years, Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine, 21281 Chardon Road in Euclid, has been a place of prayer, reflection, and community for visitors from across Northeast Ohio and beyond. In 2026, the Shrine marks this milestone anniversary with a series of special events honoring its rich history and enduring mission.

Founded in 1926 and inspired by the original Lourdes grotto in France, the Shrine has long served as a peaceful destination where individuals and families can step away from the busyness of daily life. Surrounded by natural beauty, it offers a quiet setting for prayer, spiritual renewal, and connection.

The centennial jubilee celebration will begin on Sunday, May 31, 2026 with a 9:30 a.m. Mass celebrated by Bishop Edward Malesic of the Diocese of Cleveland, followed by a meet-and-greet reception at St. Ann's Dining Hall. Later in the year, on Sunday, October 25, Auxiliary Bishop Michael Woost will visit the Shrine to celebrate Benediction and the Rosary as part of the ongoing celebration. There will be a small reception after the 4 p.m. services.

Throughout the anniversary year, visitors will also have the opportunity to view and venerate a special statue blessed by Pope Francis, which will be included in entrance processions at Mass and displayed in the chapel. In addition, a new book by local author Jennifer Boresz, chronicling the history



of the Shrine, is expected to be released, offering a deeper look at its legacy in the community. The Sisters were interviewed extensively for the book, which will be available for sale soon and will live within the archives at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in downtown Cleveland.

In the warmer months, the Shrine's outdoor Masses remain a cherished tradition, drawing worshippers who appreciate the opportunity to gather in faith while surrounded by the beauty of nature. These services, along with daily visitation, continue to make the Shrine a meaningful destination for people of all ages.

As Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine enters its second century, it remains a place where faith, history, and community come together—just as they have for generations. Visit www.srstrinity.com or call (216) 481-8232 for more information.

Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine A Place That Stays With You

By Dan Miller, Today's Family Editor

For many families, Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine isn't just a destination—it's part of their story.

I first visited the Shrine as a boy with my grandfather. I remember the peacefulness... and, if I'm being honest, not loving the long walk up the hill to pray the rosary. After he passed, my grandmother kept the tradition alive in her own way, gathering the family for the Shrine's roast beef dinners—a simple ritual that brought everyone together.

Years later, the Shrine became part of my own story in a deeper way. My wife and I were married there, outdoors at the grotto during a summer heat wave—cool in the shade, while our guests sat in the blazing sun.

Even now, one small moment still sticks with me. As a child, I once asked a groundskeeper if people ever lit candles without donating. He smiled and said, "You can cheat me or the Shrine, but you can't cheat God."

It's funny how places like this stay with you—not just in faith, but in memory.

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Mayor Justin M. Bibb



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May 27, 2026 • 8:00am - 5:00pm

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clevelandmetroschools.org/schools/registration-and-enrollment/preschool





Growing through play and discovery at Creative Playrooms

Helping children to develop not only academically, but as well-rounded individuals ready for whatever comes next

At Creative Playrooms Montessori & Child Care Centers, early education is built around a simple but powerful idea: children learn best when they are engaged, supported, and free to explore.

Through a blend of play-based learning, Montessori principles, and elements of the Reggio Emilia approach, Creative Playrooms creates an environment that focuses on the whole child—supporting physical, emotional, and cognitive development from the very beginning.

What sets Creative Playrooms apart is the flexibility it offers families. Parents can choose between a traditional preschool experience or a true Montessori program, giving them the ability to match their child's learning style with the right educational approach. This combination of options is unique, bringing together the structure

of Montessori education with the convenience of full-service childcare.

The Montessori philosophy, developed by Maria Montessori, emphasizes independence, curiosity, and hands-on learning. In Creative Playrooms' Montessori classrooms, teachers serve as guides, helping children select developmentally appropriate materials and encouraging them to learn at their own pace. Classrooms are designed to foster creativity, social interaction, and problem-solving, with extended periods of uninterrupted time for exploration and discovery.

Across all programs, Creative Playrooms is guided by the belief that children already carry within them the potential of who they will become. The role of educators is to nurture that potential by providing a safe, structured environment where

learning feels natural and engaging.

Programs are available for children from as young as six weeks through 12 years old, allowing families to grow with the center over time. Each stage is designed with age-appropriate goals in mind.

Infants in the Discovery program follow individualized schedules and participate in activities that support early motor development, while caregivers maintain close communication with families through daily updates. Toddlers in the Investigators program are encouraged to explore their surroundings, engage in hands-on play, and begin building social skills through interaction with peers.

As children move into the preschool years, the focus shifts to preparing them for the next stage

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**Field Trips and Special Guests vary by location*



Across all programs, Creative Playrooms is guided by the belief that children already carry within them the potential of who they will become.

of learning. In the Explorers and Pre-K Pathfinders classrooms, children participate in activities that build foundational skills in areas such as early literacy, math, science, and social development—all while continuing to learn through play.

For families who need additional flexibility, Creative Playrooms also offers options like junior kindergarten, before- and after-school care, and summer camp programs for older children. These programs provide a balance of structure and independence, giving school-age children time for both academic support and creative exploration.

Beyond the classroom, enrichment opportunities are woven into the daily experience. Children may participate in activities such as music, gymnastics, Spanish classes, and science exploration. A standout feature is the on-site swimming program, where children learn water safety and build confidence in a pool designed specifically for young learners.

Daily routines are thoughtfully designed



to support both children and parents. Meals—including breakfast, snacks, and hot lunches—are prepared by experienced cooks, helping simplify busy mornings for families. At its core, Creative Playrooms is committed to providing a clean, safe, and nurturing environment where children can grow into confident, capable learners. By balancing structured learning with opportunities for creativity and independence, the program helps children develop not only academically, but as well-rounded individuals ready for whatever comes next.

Creative Playrooms has locations in Solon, Westlake, Independence, Parma, Maple Hts. and Strongsville. For more information please visit creativeplayrooms.com.

Article by Dan Miller

BABY NAMES 2026



Classic, Cool, and Nature-Inspired

This year's baby name trends show a clear shift toward names that feel grounded, timeless, and connected to nature. Parents are favoring softer vintage names for girls and strong-but-simple names for boys. Short, two-syllable names continue to dominate, along with nature-inspired picks.

You'll also see a continued rise in "old soul" names—those that feel like they belong to another era but still work perfectly today.

Trending Girls' Names

Olive
Isla
Eloise
Maeve
Nova

Ivy
Amelia
Aurora
Hazel
Willow

Trending Boys' Names

Leo
Theo
Hudson
Asher
Milo

Silas
Everett
Rowan
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Board of Developmental Disabilities

Cuyahoga DD serves more than 15,000 county residents of all ages and is primarily supported by a property tax levy last approved by voters in 2005.

The Many Shapes of Motherhood

What the animal world can teach us about care, connection, and letting go

By Justin Daniels, Today's Family

This time of year, we often picture motherhood in one very specific way. But in the animal world, the story is a little more varied.

Across the animal world, the bond between parent and offspring can take many different forms. Some are brief but intense. Others stretch across a lifetime. All are shaped by what's needed in that moment—and each tells its own version of what it means to care, protect, and prepare the next generation.

Take elephants, for example. In herds of African elephant, family bonds are deep and enduring. Daughters often remain with their mothers for life, forming multi-generational groups where grandmothers, aunts, and siblings all play a role. These herds move, rest, and raise young together, creating a strong sense of continuity and connection that can last for decades.

In the ocean, orca families share a similar closeness. Orcas are known

to stay with their mothers throughout their lives, with mothers continuing to guide and support their offspring well into adulthood. It's a powerful example of a bond that doesn't fade with time, but instead evolves.

Other animals take a different approach. Consider the bald eagle, a symbol many families have come to know through popular nest cameras. Eagle parents are attentive and protective, working together to feed and shelter their young. For a time, everything centers on the nest. But as the eaglets grow, they are encouraged—sometimes quite firmly—to leave. What begins as constant care eventually gives way to independence.

In the world of gray wolf, family life becomes a shared effort. Packs are often made up of parents and their offspring, with older siblings sometimes helping to care for and teach the younger ones. Responsibility is spread across the group, reinforcing the idea that raising the



Adobe Stock / By Photocreo Bednarek

next generation isn't always the work of one alone.

Even among primates like chimpanzee, where emotional bonds are strong and learning takes years, there is still a gradual shift. Young chimps rely heavily on their mothers early on, but over time, they begin to navigate the world more independently, carrying with them the lessons they've learned.

What becomes clear across all of these examples is that there is no single blueprint for motherhood. Some bonds remain close across a lifetime. Others are defined by a season of deep connection followed by distance and growth. Some are

shared among many. All are shaped by circumstance, environment, and the needs of the child.

And yet, there is a common thread.

Whether it lasts for months or decades, whether it is expressed through constant presence or the gradual act of letting go, motherhood in the natural world is rooted in care. It is the instinct to protect, to guide, and to give what is needed—when it is needed.

As we celebrate Mother's Day, it's worth remembering that while the details may look different from one family to the next, the heart of it remains the same.

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Every child needs family

May is National Foster Parent Month

Cuyahoga County children need your help. There are more than 2,000 children in DCFS custody through no fault of their own. Victims of abuse and/or neglect, some may need special care or attention to help them deal with the impact of trauma in their young lives. Each of these children needs and deserves a family who will love and protect them, but there is a shortage of homes and facilities across Ohio. You can help by becoming a foster or adoptive parent.

What is foster care?

- A protective service for children and families.
- Full-time care of children, usually on a temporary basis.
- Typically results in family reunification or a permanent, adoptive home.

Who are the children needing foster care?

- Children who have experienced physical abuse, neglect or abandonment;

or whose parent(s) are in jail or hospitalized.

- All ages, races, and cultures.
- Some may have physical, developmental, emotional, and/or behavioral issues.
- Many have experienced extreme trauma and deprivation.

What do foster parents do?

- Provide basic daily care and supervision.
- Act in the place of the parent, making sure all needs are met.
- Take children to medical and therapy appointments.
- Apply nonphysical discipline techniques that are fair and age appropriate.
- Advocate for the child and participate in Child and Family Services meetings.
- Support children in their visitation plan with their biological families or prospective adoptive families.
- Support either reunification or an alternate plan.



- Stay up-to-date on training.
- Respect the culture, race, and background of the children and their families.

What are the requirements to become a foster parent?

- At least 21 years of age.
- Have sufficient income to meet their own basic needs.
- Be in good physical, emotional, and mental health.
- Single or part of a couple -- homosexual or heterosexual -- in a stable relationship for at least one year.
- No educational or religious requirements and home ownership is not necessary.

Is there help to foster?

- Boarding expenses, reimbursed at a daily rate.
- Monthly clothing allowance.
- A medical card for medical, dental, and therapeutic services.
- Car mileage reimbursement for necessary transportation of foster children.
- Support groups, scheduled visits, 24-hour access to the agency, and a wide range of supportive services.

To learn more about fostering or adopting contact Cuyahoga County Division of Child & Family Services at (216) 881-5775 or submit an interest form on their website at www.everychildneedsfamily.com.



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cuyahogafosterandadoption@jfs.ohio.gov



Cuyahoga County
Division of Children and Family Services



Spring Showdown at Lake Metroparks Farmpark

May 24, 2026 • 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Lake Metroparks Farmpark will host the sixth annual Spring Showdown Lamb & Goat Show featuring young men and women ages 8 to 18 showing their lambs, commercial ewes and market goats. The youth will demonstrate their showing abilities and animal husbandry skills to professional judges. The show is a collaboration between the Spring

Showdown Lamb & Goat Show Committee and Lake Metroparks.

Admission: \$9 ages 12 through 59, \$8 ages 60 and older, \$7 ages 2–11, children younger than 2 are free.

Lake Metroparks Farmpark is located at 8800 Euclid Chardon Rd. (Rt. 6) in Kirtland.

Visit www.lakemetroparks.com for more info.



Some days you feel like parent of the year. Other days... not so much. Tell us about it. The funny, the frustrating, the “did that really just happen?” moments.

We’re collecting real stories from local parents—and yours might be featured.

Scan here. It takes less than a minute.



Short and messy is fine—we’ll help shape it!

“Thought I was crushing it...”

I packed a full, healthy lunch—turkey sandwich, fruit, yogurt, even a little note. Felt like Parent of the Year.

My son came home starving.

Turns out... I forgot to actually put the lunch in his backpack.

— Mom of two, Chesterland

“Confidence is key... until it isn’t.”

Sent my daughter to school in what I thought was a cute, laid-back outfit.

Drop-off felt great.

Pick-up? She informed me it was picture day.

— Todd, Dad in Richmond Hts.

“Winning at bedtime... or so I thought.”

Kids were in bed early, no complaints, no stalling. I was feeling really good about my parenting.

Went downstairs, sat down, relaxed...

Then realized it was 6:45 pm.

— Mom, Lyndhurst

“I’ll take the small victory.”

My toddler had a full meltdown over the wrong color cup... but eventually calmed down and used their words to ask for the blue one.

No tears (from me) by the end—counting that as a win.

— Nicole, Mom in Mentor

“Didn’t see this coming.”

I let my kids “help” make dinner, fully expecting a mess.

Not only did they stay engaged, they actually ate everything on their plates.

I’m still in shock.

— Bob, Grandfather in Wickliffe

“Trying to be fun backfires.”

Told my kids we were having “breakfast for dinner” to mix things up.

They were thrilled... until they realized I meant eggs and toast, not donuts and pancakes.

I’ve never seen excitement turn that fast.

— Mom, Beachwood

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No Screens, No Weekends: Family Life in 1776

By Dan Miller, Today's Family

As the nation approaches its 250th anniversary, it's a fitting time to look back—not just at the founding of a country, but at the everyday lives of the families who lived through it.

Imagine waking your child up tomorrow morning—not for school or soccer practice, but to help start the fire.

In 1776, that wasn't unusual. For most families in early America, daily life revolved around survival, not schedules. There were no school drop-offs, no weekend plans, and certainly no screens competing for attention. Instead, each day was shaped by daylight, the seasons, and the work that needed to be done.

Children were a vital part of that rhythm from a young age.

A typical day might begin at sunrise. Before breakfast, children could already be helping with chores—feeding animals, gathering wood, or fetching water. Even younger children had responsibilities, often working alongside parents and older siblings. There was little separation between “adult work” and “kid time.” Everyone contributed.

School looked very different, too. Some children attended small, one-room schoolhouses, often for only part of the year. Others learned at home, picking up reading, writing, and arithmetic as time allowed. Education was important, but it was often secondary to the immediate needs of the family.

And weekends? They didn't really exist.

The idea of a five-day workweek wouldn't take hold until much later. In 1776, most families worked six days a week, with Sunday reserved

primarily for church and rest. Even then, “rest” didn't necessarily mean a full day off—it just meant a slower pace.

But that doesn't mean childhood was all work and no fun.

Without organized sports or structured activities, children found their own ways to play. They ran, climbed, explored, and invented games using whatever was around them. Free time was unstructured, imaginative, and almost always outdoors.

Evenings often brought families together in ways that feel surprisingly familiar today. After a long day, families gathered by candlelight or the hearth. There might be storytelling, music, or simply conversation. It was a time to reconnect, share experiences, and wind down together.

In many ways, family life in 1776 was harder than it is today. Daily tasks required more time, more effort, and more physical labor. But in other ways, it was simpler. There were fewer distractions, fewer outside pressures, and a stronger sense of working together as a family unit.

Of course, no one is suggesting we trade modern life for 18th-century routines. Few of us would be eager to give up conveniences like running water, transportation, or the flexibility that today's schedules allow.

But there's something worth noticing in that earlier way of life.

Children had more independence. Families spent more time together, not because they scheduled it, but because life required it. And play—while less structured—was still an essential part of growing up.

As we celebrate America's 250th anniversary, it's interesting to look back and consider how much has changed—and how much hasn't.



Families are still balancing responsibilities. Parents are still trying to support their children while preparing them for the future. And kids, no matter the century, are still learning,

growing, and finding their place in the world.

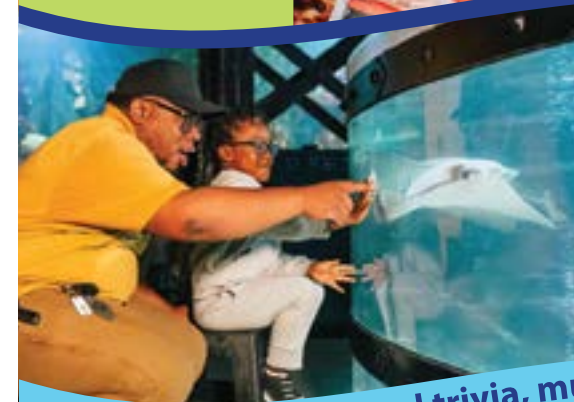
The details may look different, but the heart of family life remains the same.

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valleyartcenter.org/camps



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Party Perfect: 10 Birthday Ideas Kids Will Love

Cake is easy. The party? That's where things get tricky. Luckily, Northeast Ohio is packed with places that turn birthdays into memorable, stress-free celebrations. Whether your child loves animals, art, sports, or a little bit of everything, these 10 party spots offer something for every personality—and make parents' lives a whole lot easier.

Adventure Zone Family Fun Center

5600 Lake Rd E, Geneva-on-the-Lake
(440) 466-3555

www.adventurezonefun.com

Looking for an action-packed birthday? Adventure Zone delivers a choose-your-own-adventure style celebration packed with variety. Guests receive wristbands to enjoy attractions like go-karts, bumper boats, mini golf, climbing walls, and more, allowing kids to explore at their own pace. Parties include a reserved pavilion space, and families are welcome to bring their own food, cake, and decorations. The birthday child is free with a minimum number of guests, making it a strong value for larger groups. With so many options in one location, it's easy to create a customized experience that keeps everyone engaged from start to finish.

Best for: High-energy kids who want lots of choices.

Atlas Cinemas

Mentor, Euclid, Shaker Square, Aurora
atlascinemas.net

Atlas Cinemas offers a classic birthday experience with a big-screen twist that's easy for parents to plan. Party packages include movie tickets, popcorn, drinks, and candy for each guest, along with access to a party area for cake and celebration time before or after the film. Families can choose from options tailored to different age groups, with upgrades available for evening showings or specialty films. Guests bring their own cake and decorations, keeping things simple and flexible. It's a relaxed, low-stress option that combines entertainment and celebration in one place—perfect for kids who love the movie theater experience.

Best for: Movie lovers and low-key celebrations.



Busy Bees Pottery & Arts Studio

Great Lakes Mall, Mentor
(440) 290-7767

mentor.busybeesart.com

Busy Bees Pottery & Arts Studio offers creative, hands-on birthday parties where kids make something special to take home. Each celebration includes a private party room, dedicated host, and guided art activity, along with invitations and a keepsake handprint for the birthday child. Party options range from pottery painting and canvas art to mosaics, clay building, and candle making, with choices suited for a variety of ages. Some projects are ready the same day, while others are kiln-fired and picked up later. With all setup and cleanup handled, it's a stress-free option that blends fun, creativity, and lasting memories.

Best for: Creative kids who love arts and crafts.

Cleveland Metroparks Zoo

3900 Wildlife Way, Cleveland
(216) 661-6500

www.clevelandmetroparks.com/zoo

For animal lovers, Cleveland Metroparks Zoo offers a one-of-a-kind birthday experience surrounded by wildlife. Parties are held at Koala Junction Outpost and include zoo admission, a private party space, and themed activities that keep kids engaged throughout the day. Packages vary in size and can include food, drinks, and attraction vouchers for experiences like the carousel or train. Families can also add extras such as animal encounters or face painting. With flexible options for both small and larger groups, it's a memorable way to celebrate while exploring one of the area's most popular family destinations.

Best for: Animal lovers and outdoor adventurers.

Cuts N Curls

6025 Kruse Drive, Solon
(440) 542-1750

cutsncurls.net

Cuts N Curls creates a birthday experience that blends creativity, confidence, and a touch of glam. Each party includes hands-on crafting along with salon-style fun like hairstyling, mini makeovers, and personalized keepsakes. With themed options ranging from princess and mermaid parties to fashion design and splatter paint, there's something for every personality and age group. Dedicated party coordinators handle all the details, allowing parents to relax

and enjoy the celebration. Guests leave with something they created and a boost of confidence, making it more than just a party—it's an experience kids will remember.

Best for: Kids who love glam, fashion, and self-expression.

Greater Cleveland Aquarium

FirstEnergy Powerhouse

2000 Sycamore Street, Cleveland
groups@greaterclevelandaquarium.com
(216) 862-8803 ext. 7705

www.greaterclevelandaquarium.com

Greater Cleveland Aquarium offers an underwater-themed birthday experience that's both fun and educational. Party packages include aquarium admission, a private party space, and a guided activity or scavenger hunt led by an educator. Multiple package levels allow families to choose the right fit for their group size, with options to add food, extra time, or special experiences. Guests can explore exhibits filled with sharks, rays, and colorful marine life, making the celebration feel like an adventure. With flexible planning and built-in entertainment, it's a unique way to celebrate a birthday in an immersive environment.

Best for: Curious kids and ocean explorers.

Jump Start! Gymnastics

23700 Mercantile Road, Beachwood
Rear of National Biological Building

(216) 896-0295

jsgymnastics.com

Jump Start Gymnastics is a high-energy party destination where kids celebrate through movement and play. Led by trained coaches, parties include a mix of structured activities and free play using obstacle courses, gymnastics equipment, a trampoline, and a foam pit. Each event features dedicated gym time followed by a party area for food, cake, and gifts. Basic supplies and cleanup are included, making it easy for parents to host without the stress. It's an ideal option for active kids who want a celebration that feels more like a fun-filled play session than a traditional party.

Best for: Energetic kids who love to climb, jump, and move.





The Little Gym of Shaker Heights
20707 Chagrin Blvd., Shaker Heights
(216) 232-3062

www.thelittlegym.com/ohio-shaker-heights

The Little Gym of Shaker Heights offers active, structured birthday parties designed to keep kids moving and engaged. Each 90-minute celebration includes instructor-led games, obstacle courses, and music, along with time for cake and gifts in a private party space.

Families can choose from themed options like superheroes, princesses, or dinosaurs, adding a personalized touch to the experience. Setup, cleanup, and basic supplies are all included, making it a convenient choice for parents. With a balance of guided activities and free play, it's a fun, stress-free way for kids to celebrate in a safe, energetic environment.

Best for: Younger kids who enjoy guided play and themes.

Lost Nation Sports Park

38630 Jet Center Drive, Willoughby
Marilyn@linsportspark.com
(440) 602-4000 ex. 223
lostnationsports.com

Lost Nation Sports Park is perfect for kids who want a birthday filled with action and open space to play. Parties take place inside a large indoor facility with access to turf fields for games like soccer, kickball, dodgeball, and

more. Guests can also enjoy basketball courts and batting cages, depending on the party setup. A private party room provides space for food and celebration, with families welcome to bring their own refreshments. It's a flexible option that works especially well for larger groups or sports-loving kids who prefer a fast-paced, game-focused party experience.

Best for: Sports-loving kids and larger groups.

Snapology Cleveland

23645 Mercantile Rd, Suite H, Beachwood
(216) 990-8988
www.snapology.com/ohio-cleveland

Snapology offers a unique birthday experience that combines creativity, building, and STEM-based fun. Parties are led by trained facilitators who guide kids through hands-on challenges based on themes like superheroes, animals, or science fiction. Guests work together using LEGO® bricks and other materials to complete interactive projects that encourage teamwork and problem-solving. All setup and cleanup are handled, making it a simple option for parents. With customizable themes and engaging activities, Snapology delivers a celebration that feels like play while sparking imagination and curiosity.

Best for: Builders, thinkers, and STEM-loving kids.

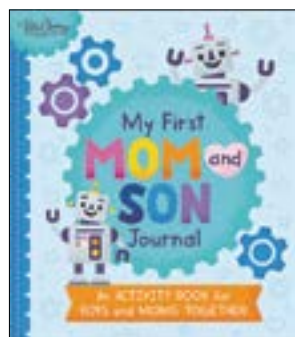


A magician says he will disappear on the count of three. "Uno, dos..." and he vanishes without a tres.

A wife watches her wedding video and shouts at the screen, "Don't do it, you fool!"

Joggers creep me out. Not because they're out and about at all hours of the day and night, but because they find so many bodies.

It's evening and little Johnny and his friend are sitting by a campfire. They are plagued by swarms of mosquitoes for over an hour and it gets worse when the sun goes down. Suddenly, a lightning bugs appear and Johnny exclaims, "These darn mosquitoes! Now they've brought lanterns to help find us."

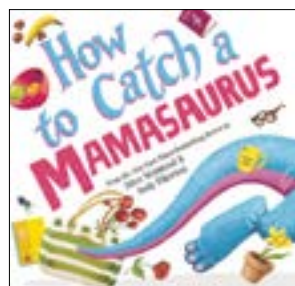


My First Mom and Son Journal

By Katie Clemons

This engaging prompt journal is the perfect tool to strengthen mother-son relationships. Kids can record memories, swap stories, compare perspectives, and explore common and unique interests with their mom! Letters back and forth and interactive lists invite both to reflect, write, and doodle about topics timely to their lives as kids build self-confidence and improve their penmanship.

Paperback; \$14.99; ages 5–8.



How to Catch a Mamasaurus

By Alice Walstead

The Catch Club Kids are at it again! This time, they're out to trap the Mamasaurus—a one-of-a-kind creature whose love, kindness, and awesomeness have no limits. The kids try to trap the Mamasaurus with all her favorite activities, but will they succeed?

Hardcover; \$12.99; ages 4–10.



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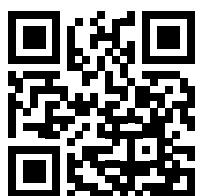
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